

in the workplace and at home. And I think that ought to be one of the major issues that we take into the 2000 elections, even as I continue to redouble my efforts to pass the child care initiative we have before the Congress, to pass the strengthening of equal pay initiative we have before the Congress, and to do many other things.

So I'm very grateful that I've had a chance to serve these last 7 years. I'm grateful for what we have done and what we still can do. But the decision we should be making as Democrats is that we are not going to let our children and our grandchildren down. We're going to use the—literally, it's the only opportunity we've had in my lifetime to have this level of pros-

perity, in the absence of domestic or foreign crisis, to shape the future of our dreams.

The only chance we have to do that is with the massive involvement and leadership of the women of this country. And you will be one of the most important engines of the victories that we have in the year 2000.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:39 p.m. in the Potomac Room at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Janice Griffin, national chair, Women's Leadership Forum; and Lauren Supina, Director, White House Office for Women's Initiative and Outreach.

## Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Hispanic Leadership Forum Dinner

*November 9, 1999*

Thank you very much. After that introduction, I am thinking many things. *[Laughter]* I'm thinking, I wonder how long it will be before Miguel will run for office. *[Laughter]* I'm thinking, it is much better to have such a friend than an opponent. *[Laughter]* Thank you. Thank you for being my friend in ways that are personal as well as political. You may, however, have caused me quite a problem tonight, not over Vieques but over saying I have a Hispanic soul. Not very long ago the great African-American Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison said I was the first black President. *[Laughter]* And if I am the first black President and the first President to have a Hispanic soul, I'm afraid they'll never let me go home to Ireland. *[Laughter]* It might be worth it. *[Laughter]*

Loretta Sanchez, thank you very much for your leadership and standing up here tonight and performing in your usual, laid back, repressed fashion. *[Laughter]* What a joy it is to have somebody like you in Congress who's not ashamed to have a good time being in public life. We ought to all enjoy it and be honored.

You know, when I see people trudging around here all the time, complaining about how hard public life is and all the burdens, I say, "You know, they're not giving these jobs away. Nobody made you come up here." *[Laughter]* Peo-

ple come to me all the time and say, "Hasn't this been just awful for you?" I say, no. *[Laughter]* It's actually been quite wonderful. You know, a few turns in the road one way or the other and I could be home doing deeds, wills, and divorces. *[Laughter]* I am grateful to be here, and I like it, every day of it. And Loretta likes it, and she's grateful to be here, and I appreciate that.

I want to thank the administration members who are here: Secretary Slater, who represented me at home today in Arkansas at the funeral of Daisy Bates, a great hero of the civil rights movement; Administrator Alvarez; Maria Echaveste; my former Secretary of Transportation and Energy, Federico Peña, who did a superb job in both places, it's nice to see you. I would also like to thank another former member of my administration who is here tonight, who is now working for Vice President Gore, Janet Murguia. Her brother was just confirmed as the first Hispanic Federal judge from Kansas, so we've got one of them on the payroll, anyway.

I want to thank all the people at my table and other places who had so much to do with the success of this evening, Joe and Alfie and Roger and Leo and all the others. Nelson, thank you very much for your leadership. Thank you, Joe Andrew and the others who are here from

the DNC. Lottie Shackelford, Lydia Camarillo, thank you for your willingness to go run our convention. Make sure we all have a good time out there, will you? *[Laughter]*

And let me say one serious word before I go forward. There's one person I really wish were here tonight, who died a couple of days ago, the great mayor of Sacramento, California, Mayor Joe Serna. Mickey Ibarra would be here, but he's out there representing me at that service today. So I ask you all to remember Isabel Serna and the family in your prayers. They've been through a lot. He was a magnificent mayor and a great Democrat and a great friend of mine. He was one of those people who enjoyed public service, had a good time doing it, and was proud down to the last day—his health would no longer permit him to serve—and I ask you to remember.

I also would like to thank two people who aren't here tonight: one, Secretary Richardson, who is still in the administration; and the other whom I wish were here, Henry Cisneros, who has served us so ably and is such a great man. I thank him.

Now, as all of you know, we're trying to finish this year's budget, and we're trying to do a few other things before the Congress goes home. And I'd like to mention just a few of them because I think they relate particularly to the concerns of the Hispanic community. I want you to know what's still out there. We're fighting to get a reaffirmation of the commitment that Congress made last year, right before the election, that the majority, the Republican majority has voted to go back on. But I am determined that we will reinstate it, and that is to put 100,000 teachers out there in the early grades so we can lower class size and give our children a better education.

We are fighting to give our hardest pressed communities that still have a high crime rate 50,000 police officers on the street. We are fighting to raise the minimum wage, which I think is very, very important, especially for lower income workers, many of whom are Hispanic. You know, we lifted over 1½ million Hispanics out of poverty by doubling the earned-income tax credit in 1993 and then by raising the minimum wage. And it's time to raise it again. And I hope we can prevail, and I hope you will help us.

We're trying to pass hate crimes legislation. We're trying to pass legislation that will enable

disabled people to go into the work force and not lose their Medicaid health insurance. We're trying to pass the Caribbean Basin initiative and the African trade bill, which would open our markets to the Caribbean nations and African nations and open their markets more to us and put our Caribbean neighbors on a more equal footing with our Mexican neighbors in our trading relations.

All of those things can still be done before the Congress goes home. And insofar as any of you have influence with anyone, I hope you will get out there and help us with our agenda, because all these things reflect the deepest values of the Democratic Party and our commitment to the future.

I just want to make a couple of other points. I don't want to keep you late, and most of you have heard me give a lot of speeches. I had a very emotional day today. I was thinking about many things. I'm about to leave to go to Europe. Hillary and Chelsea just left to go to the Middle East to continue the work that I was doing last week in our hope that we can, over the next 100 days, actually get a framework for a final peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Then I'm going to Turkey and to Greece, two great friends of America, in the hope I can help them resolve some of their difficulties over Cyprus and other issues before I leave office. And then I'm going on to Bulgaria, a great ally of ours, to try to keep pushing to make peace in the Balkans, where we have had to take up arms in Bosnia and Kosovo to stop ethnic cleansing and slaughter.

And today I had this incredible experience, which would have been wonderful for any President but was especially wonderful for me. I hosted in the White House about 30 members of the United States Congress, Republicans and Democrats, and a couple of hundred other people to give the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award Congress can award, to the nine students who integrated Little Rock Central High School 42 years ago.

For those of you who are old enough to remember that or young enough to have studied it, you may know also that, in addition to the courage of the young children and the power of the Supreme Court's decisions and the court orders, the power of the Presidency was necessary for the integration of Little Rock Central High School when President Eisenhower sent

in the 101st Airborne Division and later federalized the Arkansas National Guard to stop the obstruction.

Today I signed a bill naming the Old Executive Office Building after President Eisenhower because he worked there many years in the military. That building, until the Great Depression, housed all the offices of the executive branch, including all the offices of what was then called the War Department, except for the Treasury Building and the Office of the President. So Dwight Eisenhower actually worked in that building as long as he worked in the White House as President.

And his son, General John Eisenhower, who is also a noted historian, and John's wife and their daughter were there, so I asked them to come. So Dwight Eisenhower's son and granddaughter were actually present as we recognized these nine students. And because Arkansas is my home, I have lived with the reality of these people all my life, since I was 11 years old.

And I said today that these nine students, in their simple desire to get a better education became, as children, our teachers. When I lived at home, literally 99 percent of all children in my State went to segregated schools. And we may have had an opinion one way or the other, but everybody more or less accepted it was the way it was.

But when they did what they did, then all of a sudden, they came crashing in our lives and everyone had to decide: Where do you stand; what do you believe; how will we live? Thirty years later, I hosted them in the Governor's Mansion for the 30th anniversary of Little Rock Central High. I brought them all in, and I showed them all the rooms where the then-Governor planned the obstruction to keep them out the school. They got a big kick out of that.

And 40 years later, 2 years ago, I went home to Little Rock, to the steps of Little Rock Central High School—which in the 1920's was voted the most beautiful school building in America, and it's still a magnificent structure—and I held the doors open for them, with our Governor, as they walked freely through the front door, something they had not been able to do 40 years ago. And then 2 years later, they came to the White House, with all their myriad family, kinfolks, and friends, for a celebration that truly represented America at its best.

This has been a great day, a great day to be President and a great day to be an American. And to end it with you—you and all those you represent have been so good to me and to Hillary and to the Vice President and Mrs. Gore—is a great privilege.

I just want to leave you with a couple of thoughts. Number one, many of you helped me in 1992 because you knew we didn't want to keep on going the way we were going, because we had economic problems and social discord and political drift, and Government was discredited. So you knew what you were against, and you were willing to try something else. But I was just an argument for most of you. Most of you never met me before I started running for President, and you decided to give me a chance.

So the first thing I want to say to you is it is not an argument anymore. Together, we made a good decision, and we've changed America for the better. Seven years later, when you go home tomorrow and you go back across the country and people ask you why you were there, you can say, "Well, we gave him a chance, and we tried it their way." And as has already been said, we not only have had the most diverse administration with the most diverse appointments, including the judicial appointments—more of whom I'm trying to get up for a vote by the way—in history, but we have the longest peacetime expansion in history, 19.8 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years, the lowest crime rates in 30 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the lowest female unemployment rate in 46 years, the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years, with the smallest Federal Government in 37 years. It is not an argument anymore. It's working. It's the right direction for America.

So the second thing I want to say to you is, we've got to decide now, what are we going to do with this. Because even if I pass everything I'm trying to pass, if we get a good minimum wage bill and the 100,000 teachers and the 50,000 police and we get the antienvironmental riders off the bills and we pass the Caribbean Basin/Africa trade initiative, we do all the things I mentioned to you, there still will be a lot for America to do.

And of all Americans, Hispanics ought to be able to think about this, our country, as we would our family. I remember one of the nicest

nights we ever shared at the White House, Federico and I, was when we previewed that wonderful movie "Mi Familia" at the White House.

In my lifetime, which is stretching on and on as the days go by, in my lifetime, this is the first chance America has had to have, on the one hand, the prosperity and confidence that we have and, on the other, to be unburdened by serious, wrenching foreign threats to our security or domestic crises. In the 1960's we had, for a brief period more or less, the best economy we'd ever had, with low unemployment, low inflation. But we had, first, the civil rights crisis to deal with and then the war in Vietnam.

Now what do you do, as a person, as a family, as a business, if things are better than they have ever been, but you can look ahead to the future and clearly see challenges and opportunities that will not be met or seized if you don't do certain things you're not doing now? What do you do? That is the great question before our people.

I can tell you—you know, I don't know about you, but I'll just use my own life; from the time I was a little boy, one of the—well, when I first ran for office, let me start with that. I asked an old sage in Arkansas politics, I said—I was running really well in this race for Governor. I said, "What do you think I ought to really remember?" He said, "Bill, just remember this: In politics, you're always most vulnerable when you think you're invulnerable."

How many times can you remember in your own life, when you broke your concentration, when you got divided, when you made a stupid mistake because you thought things were rocking along so well, nothing bad could happen? How many times has that happened to a family or to a business, where you just think things are going to roll on forever? It's never that way. Human nature is not that way. Human circumstances don't work that way. I'm telling you, this is a precious jewel we have been given, a gift we have been given as a country, to look ahead and say, "Okay, what are the big challenges? What are the big opportunities?" You ought to make your own lists. And ask yourself, in your lifetime, has there ever been an opportunity like this for America?

What are the challenges? I'll just give you a few. The number of people over 65 is going to double in 30 years. There will be two people

working for every one person drawing Social Security. Medicare is supposed to run out of money in 15 years. Seventy-five percent of our seniors can't afford prescription drugs but need them to stay alive and maintain their quality of life. How are we going to deal with the aging of America?

We have the largest number of children in our schools in history, the first time more people than the baby boom, and by far more diverse. Loretta was talking about that Republican newsletter from northwest Arkansas. That's really true. Northwest Arkansas is one of the fastest growing areas of America, has been for 20 years, and one of the most racially and religiously homogeneous areas in the country. And all of a sudden, boom, they have this big infusion of Hispanics. The Catholic Church there now has a Spanish mass every Sunday and has had for the last several years. And that's nothing if you're from Orange County, but if you're from northwest Arkansas, that's a huge deal. [*Laughter*]

We also have a big influx of people in western Arkansas from Southeast Asia. But last year, our State ranked first or second—I'm not sure which, but I'm sure it's one of the two—in the percentage growth of Hispanic population. Joe Andrew didn't mention this, I don't think, but in addition to all the mayors we've celebrated, we've had a truly historic, breathtaking election in the State of Mississippi, where we won the governorship in a State where they didn't think a Democrat could be elected for love or money.

And part of it was the overwhelming African-American turnout. But there are also more Hispanics moving to Mississippi. All over the South, their voices are being heard. And we only won the election by about 6,000 votes, so everybody can take credit for the victory. [*Laughter*]

So we have to think about this. What are we going to do for all these children? They need a world-class education. If we do it right, the diversity of America will be a blessing in a global society. What are we going to do about the fact that this fabulous recovery has left people and places behind? Unemployment on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is 73 percent. Upstate New York, outside of the suburbs in New York City, if it were a separate State, would rank 49th in job growth since I've been President. Hawaii, burdened by the collapse of the Asian economy, is the only State with no

economic growth—the inner cities, the Mississippi Delta, Appalachia.

How are we going to bring prosperity to people and places left behind? Do we have the will to guarantee economic growth for a generation of Americans by taking America out of debt? I gave a budget to the Congress that will get us out of debt over the next 15 years, for the first time since 1835. And the progressive party, the Democrats, ought to be for that. It sounds like a conservative thing—it is—but it's the progressive thing to do in a global economy. Because if the government is not borrowing money, you can borrow it for less, and our trading partners can get more for less, and then they can be better partners with us, and they can lift their people out of poverty.

How are we going to grow the economy and meet our environmental responsibility? We've proved you could do it. Are we going to keep doing it? We've got the lowest crime rate in 30 years. Does anybody seriously think America is as safe as it ought to be? If you do, let me just give you one statistic. The accidental death rate of children from gun shots in the United States is 9 times the rate of the next 25 biggest industrial economies combined.

I think we now know we can bring the crime rate down. Why don't we set a realistic goal? I mean realistic in terms of our dreams. Why don't we say we won't quit until America is the safest big country in the world? And if we want that, how are we going to do it?

Last night, I appeared in the first-ever town-hall meeting on the Internet, which was interesting for me, since one of the reasons I asked the Vice President to join the ticket is because I was so technologically challenged. [Laughter] It was quite a thrill for me to do that.

But there is a digital divide, and it can have huge consequences. I was in northern California the other night, meeting with people who work for eBay. Do you all ever use eBay? Buy anything on eBay? You want to hear something interesting? Over 20,000 Americans now make a living on eBay, not working for eBay, trading on eBay, many of them former welfare recipients. Think of what we could do in America to close the economic divide if we could close the digital divide, if usage and access to computers and connections to the Internet were as dense as telephone ownership and usage. Think of it. Now, these are the kind of things we ought to be thinking about.

What are the security threats of the 21st century? Well, I think one of them is we can start running away from each other because we've all of a sudden gotten afraid of trade. We need to keep expanding trade but work harder to put a human face on it, to take into account legitimate environmental issues and labor issues, but not to run away from the fact that with 4 percent of the world's people and 22 percent of the world's income if we want to continue to grow, we've got to sell something to the other 96 percent. And if we want to sell something to them, particularly since we're richer, we have to be willing to buy things. But this is a good thing.

What else? The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical, and biological, and the possibility that they can be made in smaller quantities, like everything else is smaller. We've got cell phones so small now my big old fingers won't even hit the numbers right. The miniaturization of all things technical will apply to weapons, as well, make no mistake about it. This is a serious challenge, the growth of terrorism around the world, the prospect that the terrorists, the drug runners, the organized criminals will all start working together, and the rampant threat of racial, ethnic, and religious wars—big challenges.

Which brings me to the last one. And it's what I've spent so much time on around the world and what I celebrated today with honoring the Little Rock Nine: Can we truly make our motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, real as we grow ever more diverse?

It requires, I would argue, three things. One is we have to respect, not just tolerate—not just tolerate—but respect and celebrate our differences. You know, I don't have the same attitude as the people that put out that memo Loretta talked about. I think it's a lot more interesting in America as we grow more diverse.

I'll never forget the first Cinco de Mayo celebration I went to in San Francisco. I thought, "Where has this been all my life?" [Laughter] You know? I mean, what have we been doing here?

You know, I used to—when I was Governor of my home State, I used to go to a place called Little Italy to eat spaghetti in a town called Slovak, to meet with the farmers that came there in the 1848 revolution. And now we're just repeating our history in technicolor, times four. And I think it's fascinating.

But let's stop all this tolerance stuff. Tolerance is not good enough. We need respect and celebration of our differences, number one.

Number two, we need to recognize that, as we have from the beginning, we have genuine differences of opinion, which ought to be forthrightly and publicly argued. In that sense, and if that's all we're doing, partisanship is not necessarily a bad thing. When people say partisanship with a little negative edge, what they really mean is these people in Washington are fighting their partisan battles trying to increase their power without concern for the public interest. They think there's some game going on that's not real. But we will always have honest differences.

I know why I'm a Democrat in the year 1999. And I have friends in the Republican Party who know why they're Republicans. And we honestly see the world in different ways. We ought to create a safe and constructive way for people to feel free to think and argue.

But the third thing we have to do is to recognize that the differences we celebrate and the differences we fight over, neither one of them are nearly as important as our common humanity. And that is what the world keeps forgetting, at its peril.

Don't you think it's interesting that, at a time when we talk about the Internet—this and finding a cure for cancer, and last year we actually were able to transplant nerves into the spine of laboratory animals that had had their spines severed, and for the first time ever they have movement in their lower limbs. Two years ago we identified the two genes that are the biggest predictors of breast cancer for women. Within a couple of years, when mothers take their babies home from the hospital, we'll be able to give them a genetic map which will say, here are the things your child has a greater than normal propensity for, but if you do the following things, you can minimize them. A lot of people I know, experts in the field, actually believe within a very few years babies will be born with a life expectancy of nearly a century—within a very few years. Already today, if you live to be 65, your life expectancy is over 82 years.

Isn't it interesting, at this time, with all this marvelous stuff happening, not to mention all the techno-joys we can have, that the biggest problems we have in the world are rooted in the oldest failing of human society? We are

afraid of people who are different from us. And when you're afraid of somebody who's different from you, it's easy to formalize that fear in dislike or hatred, and it's a short step to dehumanizing them, after which it's a short step to taking violent action against them and to thinking it really doesn't matter.

I'll never forget being in the airport at Kigali, Rwanda, talking to a woman who thought she had been killed, because she was cut up in one of the machete rampages in the Rwandan genocide, and she woke up to find her husband and her six children all slashed to death around her. She's the only surviving one, knowing that they had been betrayed by her neighbor, a person they lived with, lived next to her, in total peace for years, and boom, like that, they started the fight between the Hutus and Tutsis, and people turned on a dime, betrayed their neighbors-for-life, and let people be slaughtered.

Now, there are lots of other stories that are heroic on the other side. But what happens to people? Why does that happen?

Why are the Catholics and the Protestants still fighting in Northern Ireland when the Irish Republic has got the fastest growing economy in Europe, and their common heritage is rich and fascinating and interesting, and they could be having arguments in bars or in Parliament and making money, instead, and educating their children?

What is it that's keeping the Israelis and the Palestinians from taking these last few steps, the Syrians from joining in? Why are there other terrorist and rejectionist groups that are prepared to go out and kill innocent civilians to keep the Israelis and the Palestinians and the Syrians from making their final peace agreement?

If you look at America, you look at the success of people from the Indian subcontinent in America—from India, from Pakistan, from Bangladesh—the phenomenal success, if you look at the fact that India will be bigger than China in 20 years, that they both have big scientific bases of expertise, why are they fighting over the line of control in Kashmir? Why can't they work that out? Why is that such a big problem that they keep spending money preparing to go to war with one another instead of educating their children and alleviating the abject poverty that is holding them down and keeping them from their full potential? I mean, I could go on and on and on. But you get the point.

Why did I have to go into Europe and bring the power of the American military to bear in Bosnia and Kosovo to keep people from slaughtering mostly Muslims, although others were involved too. What is the deal here? Same reason, in a more—thank God—mundane but still very cruel way people were spitting on and kicking and cursing those nine kids when they tried to go to Little Rock Central High School 42 years ago.

One of the great human weaknesses is that when people get organized, they think that, in order for their tribe to matter, the other tribe has to matter less. In order for their lifestyle to be validated, somebody else's has to be invalidated, that every difference of opinion turns out to be a difference justifying the dehumanization of your opponent. This is a very dangerous thing, made more dangerous, not less, by the collision of societies and the close contact and the openness of borders.

So we need you for another reason. We need you in the Democratic Party. We need you as Americans. We need you to remind us of what the concept of family means to you. What are the obligations of people who are in your family? What do we owe to one another? If you're like me, once you get about 50, your family members, there are some you don't even like very much. But you are bound together. You are bound together.

I want you to think about that, so when you go out across the country, you go back home and people say, "Why are you here? What are you doing? Why are you a Democrat? Why are you helping who you're helping in 2000?" Say, "Well, number one, I tried him in '92 and it worked. We're in a lot better shape than we

were then, and we're in a lot better shape than we've been in a long time. Number two, I'm doing it because I want to take on the big challenges of the future. And I'm really determined that we're not going to blow this responsibility to our children and grandchildren. And number three, because the Democrats represent the best hope for creating a family in America and a family in the world that doesn't minimize our differences; it celebrates them. It doesn't minimize our arguments; it respects them. But it recognizes that underneath it all is our common humanity. And without that, nothing else matters much. With it, there's nothing we can't do."

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 p.m. in the Crystal Ballroom at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Miguel Lausell, chair, Hispanic Leadership Council; Representative Loretta Sanchez, general cochair, Lottie Shackelford, vice chair, and Nelson Diaz, Hispanic caucus leader, Democratic National Committee; dinner vice chairs Alfonso Fanjul, Roger Rivera, and Leo Perez; Jo Velazquez, president, Strategies Group International, LC; Lydia Camarillo, chief executive officer, Democratic National Convention Committee; Carlos Murguia, Judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas; former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry G. Cisneros; and Joanne Eisenhower, wife of Gen. John Eisenhower, and their daughter, Susan. The President also referred to Public Law 106-92, approved November 9, which renamed the Old Executive Office Building to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

## Remarks on Y2K Readiness and an Exchange With Reporters *November 10, 1999*

*The President.* Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank John Koskinen and all the leadership that he and others have provided in helping to prepare America for Y2K.

We are releasing our fourth and final quarterly report on public and private efforts to address the Y2K computer problem. The report shows that our hard work in this country is

paying off, and while there is more to do, I expect we will experience no major national breakdowns as a result of the year 2000 date change.

First, the report makes clear that the Federal Government is Y2K ready and leading by example. Thanks to the efforts of the Office of Management and Budget, we have completed work